



YOUR LICENSE

This chapter explains who needs a Tennessee driver license, as well as how to decide which class of license you need and whether or not you qualify. It also covers ID-Only licenses.

Who Needs a Tennessee Driver License?

If you live in Tennessee and want to drive a motor vehicle, you must have a valid Tennessee driver license.

Anyone who moves to Tennessee and has a valid driver license from another state or country must apply for a Tennessee driver license if they:

- live in the state longer than 30 days
- have taken employment, or
- would otherwise qualify as a registered voter.

What Class of License Do You Need?

In Tennessee, driver licenses are issued specifically for the class and type of vehicle you operate. Therefore, the class of license you should have depends specifically upon the type of vehicle you operate and for what purpose you use your vehicle.

The chart on the facing page and the discussion which follows should help you determine which class of driver license you need, as well as whether or not you need any special endorsements.

Class D Licenses

Generally speaking, the majority of applicants for a Tennessee driver license will be operators of regular passenger vehicles, pick-up trucks, or vans. This handbook is designed to provide the information you need to get a Class D license.

A Class D vehicle is defined as any vehicle, or any combination of vehicles, with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,000 pounds or less, as long as:

1. The vehicle is not used for the purpose of transporting hazardous materials which are required by law to be placarded.
2. The vehicle is not used to transport more than fifteen passengers **including** the driver, or
3. The vehicle is not a school bus used to transport children to and from school.

If the vehicle is used for any of these purposes, the driver is required to obtain a Commercial Driver License.

To qualify for a Class D license, you must be at least sixteen (16) years of age, and must pass a vision test, knowledge test, and driving test. If you are under age 18, you must also meet special qualifications described in the next chapter.

Class D With F (For-Hire Endorsement)

If a person's main job is to drive or transport people in a Class D vehicle, a For Hire endorsement must be added to the

Class D license. This endorsement replaces what formerly was called a "chauffeur" or "special chauffeur" license.

The Class D license with a For Hire endorsement (Class D with F) serves as a bridge between the regular driver license required for private transportation and the commercial license required for tractor-trailers, large trucks, buses and the like. Examples of people whose job requires them to have the For Hire endorsement include:

- Taxi, shuttle service drivers
- Couriers, delivery services (flowers, pizza, etc.)
- Ambulance drivers

People hired for some purpose other than driving who drive in the course of doing their job, generally do not need this endorsement. For example, plumbers, meter readers and engineers do not need the For Hire endorsement. Volunteers driving Class D vehicles also do not need this endorsement.

To add the For Hire endorsement, drivers must meet the eligibility requirements, pass the appropriate tests, and pay a fee of \$4.50. Applicants are eligible to apply for this endorsement if:

- They are at least eighteen years old,
- No challenge exists concerning their good character, competency and fitness to be so employed, and
- They will be operating a Class D vehicle.

TESTS REQUIRED — Applicants must pass the standard road test, a vision test, and a knowledge test designed specifically for the For-Hire Endorsement. To prepare for the knowledge test, you should carefully study this entire driver handbook.

Class M (Motorcycle)

The operator of a motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, or motorized bicycle will need to apply for a Class M license. These two and three-wheeled vehicles are categorized by cylinder capacity and other design features. Generally, if the vehicle is over 125 cubic centimeters, a Class M license is issued; under 125cc, a Class M limited license is issued.

Class M licenses may be issued as a single license, or along with another primary class. For example, if a driver wishes to be able to operate both a motorcycle and a Class D vehicle, he or she should apply for a Class DM license.

Applicants wishing to apply for a Class M license should obtain and read the Motorcycle Operator Manual in addition to this manual. "Off-road" motor vehicles are not allowed to be used for the road test.

Class A, B, or C (Commercial)

Operators of larger and more complex vehicles will need to apply for a Commercial Driver License (CDL). These licenses include Class A, B, and C depending upon the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), Gross Combination Weight Rating

(GCWR), and what is being transported.

In general, state law defines a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) as any vehicle or combination of vehicles weighing more than 26,000 pounds. If hazardous materials are transported, or if the vehicle is designed to transport more than fifteen (15) passengers including the driver, or if the vehicle is used as a school bus, a CDL would also be required, regardless of the weight of the vehicle.

Drivers who need a CDL should obtain the Commercial Driver License Manual which contains detailed information necessary to prepare for the tests. These manuals are available at all driver license stations.

NOTE: If a person holds a valid commercial driver license (Class A, B, or C license), this license is also valid for operating a Class D vehicle. No separate Class D license is required. A Class M license would be needed, however, if a commercial driver also wanted to operate a motorcycle.

Learner Permit (Class PD)

Instructional permits are issued in conjunction with another class of license, indicating the class of vehicle which the operator is legally entitled to drive. For example, the Class PD license allows drivers to learn how to drive Class D vehicles.

To obtain a Class PD license, you must have reached your fifteenth birthday and pass the written and vision tests. You will be permitted to operate an automobile only when accompanied by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old and who must occupy the seat beside the driver. If you are under age eighteen, you must be accompanied by a parent, step-parent, grandparent, guardian or certified driving instructor. This adult will be solely responsible for your actions while driving.

To exchange your Class PD license for a Class D license, you are required to take a driving test and another vision test. If you are less than 18 years old, you must have held a Class PD license for three months before you can apply for the Class D (or complete an approved driver education course). You also have to be at least sixteen years old.

No matter how old you are, we suggest that you take adequate time to practice your driving skills and return only when you have mastered these skills. You will not need to repeat your knowledge test unless you let it expire over 12 months.

Class H (Hardship)

A hardship license (Class H) may be issued to a minor who is fourteen or fifteen years old to operate passenger vehicles or motorcycles. These licenses are issued only in cases of family hardship and are limited to specific needs. Proof of hardship must be submitted with a Hardship Application (SF-0263). Each application is reviewed and evaluated on an individual basis. Less than one percent of all licenses issued to minors are hardship licenses.

Applicants who qualify to apply for a hardship license must pass a vision test, knowledge test, and road test. The

Class H license is valid only for daylight hours and for travel to authorized locations as specified on an attachment.

Those with a hardship (Class H) license who are at least fifteen (15) years old are extended the same privileges as those holding a Class PD license, when they are accompanied by any of the responsible adults listed for the Class PD.

Regardless of age at time of approval, a Hardship License will expire on the applicant's 16th birthday.

NOTE: If you are approved for a Hardship License and it is less than 3 months till your 16th birthday, you will be required to renew a Class PD upon expiration of your Hardship License. You will need to hold this learner permit until you have attained a total of 3 months' driving experience between the two license types.

Identification Licenses (“ID Only”)

There are two types of identification licenses which may be obtained for identification purposes only. No testing is required, but all require the applicant to meet the same standards for proof of identity as are required for any driver license. None are valid for any vehicular operation. If an applicant is under the age of eighteen (18) a responsible adult must complete a portion of the Minor/Teen-age Affidavit and Cancellation form (available at any driver license station) at the time of application.

1. The first type of ID may be issued to any person not currently holding a valid Tennessee driver license who presents positive proof of identification. At age sixty-five (65) or older, the ID does not expire.

As a service to Tennessee residents, families with children, including infants, may obtain these identification-only licenses for their children.

2. Any person who is mentally retarded or physically handicapped may obtain a “permanent identification license.” In addition to presenting positive proof of identification, they must submit a certified statement from a licensed doctor stating they are unable to operate a vehicle. Those who qualify for this ID may receive it free of charge. ID licenses issued in this manner do not expire.

Who Is Not Required To Have A Driver License?

- Any member of the armed forces while operating a motor vehicle owned or leased by any branch of the armed services of the United States, including the National Guard.
- Operators of any road machinery, farm tractor, or implement of husbandry which is temporarily operated or moved on a highway.
- Non-residents who have in their immediate possession a valid driver license issued by their home state or country, equivalent to the appropriate class or type of Tennessee license.

- Individuals who are not U.S. citizens and who, in connection with their employment in managerial or technical positions in Tennessee, may operate vehicles with a valid driver license issued by another state, country, or international body for a period of six (6) months.
- Students pursuing an approved driver training course in a public or private secondary school, or in a licensed commercial driver training school for passenger vehicles, when accompanied by a certified instructor.

Who Is Not Eligible?

- Anyone whose license is currently suspended or revoked in this, or any other state
- Anyone the Commissioner has reason to believe would not be able to operate a motor vehicle safely because of mental or physical disabilities
- Anyone who has been proven to be a habitual drunkard or who is addicted to the use of narcotics.
- Anyone required to show proof of financial responsibility who has not done so.
- Anyone under the age of eighteen who has dropped out of school before graduating, or who does not make “satisfactory progress” in school.

PENALTY FOR DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE

Driving without being licensed is a class B misdemeanor. The penalty is a fine up to five hundred dollars (\$500) and/or six months in jail.

While driving in Tennessee you must have your driver license in your possession to display upon demand to any law enforcement officer. If you do not have your license with you, you may be fined not less than two dollars (\$2.00) and no more than fifty dollars (\$50.00).

Other Driver License Services

Anatomical Gifts

More than 62,000 Americans, including over 1,000 Tennesseans, are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Eleven people die each day while waiting because there is a shortage of donors. Hundreds of thousands more need a life-enhancing tissue or cornea transplant.

By signing the back of your driver’s license, you could be giving someone the ultimate gift — the Gift of Life. When you apply for a driver’s license, or renew your current one, there will be a box for you to check which indicates your wishes to be an organ and tissue donor. You may fill out the Tennessee Organ Donor Card on the back of your license at any time. Two witnesses are required to sign as well, in order to make this a legal document.

In 1997, the law changed to make a signed and witnessed driver’s license or donor card the ultimate way to indicate a person’s decision to become a donor. The law clarifies that only the person signing the driver’s license can revoke this decision — no one else. It is important, however, for your family members to know your decision about donation so they can ensure your wishes are carried out.

For more information regarding organ and tissue donation, please contact the following agencies in your area:

East Tennessee
Mountain Region Donor Services(423) 915-0808 East Tennessee Eye Bank.....(423) 544-9625
Knoxville Area
Tenn. Donor Services.....(423) 588-1031 East Tenn. Eye Bank(423) 544-9625
Nashville Area
Tenn. Donor Services Tissue Bank.....(615) 327-2247 Lions Eye Bank.....(615) 321-3937
Chattanooga Area
Tennessee Donor Services(423) 756-5736 Lions Eye Bank.....(423) 778-4000
Jackson Area
Tennessee Donor Services(901) 668-6021
Memphis Area
Midsouth Transplant Foundation(901) 528-5923 Midsouth Eye Bank(901) 726-8264 Regional Medical Center Skin Bank(901) 575-8313

“Motor Voter”

To make it easy for citizens to apply to register to vote, the law requires us to offer you the opportunity to register to vote, or to update your voting records, when you apply for a driver license or ID. The Department does not actually process your voter registration application. Instead, we forward your information to your local election commission, if you request.